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C!N
Darwyn
The Spirit

Getting Into the Spirit

When most people talk about "the holiday spirit," they're referring to that Christmas-inspired sense of benevolence and good will. But when DC talks about "the holiday ***Spirit,***" they have a second meaning in mind—one centered on *Will Eisner's* legendary character who debuted more than sixty-five years ago.

In late November, the Spirit returns to action in ***Batman/The Spirit,*** a crossover oneshot written by *Jeph Loeb & Darwyn Cooke* with art by Cooke & *J. Bone*. Then, a few weeks later, Denny Colt graduates from co-star status to a starring role as DC launches a new monthly ***Spirit*** series written and illustrated Cooke.

"I can honestly say that this came completely out of left field for me," Cooke said. "***New Frontier*** had given me an opportunity to sort of 'sing my song' with the DC Universe, and I had planned on doing my issue of ***Solo*** for [editor] *Mark Chiarello* and then heading in a new direction.

"I was actually starting work on my creator-owned original graphic novel when Mark called up, and asked if I'd be interested in a ***Spirit*** ongoing. I was floored by the proposition... I've been a Spirit fan since age fourteen and I can honestly say that he was the only licensed character in the industry that could have got me to change course. It was kinda *Al Pacino*, y'know – 'Just when I think I'm out, they pull me back in!!!'"

The plans for a new ***Spirit*** series began when DC publisher *Paul Levitz*, executive editor *Dan DiDio*, and long-time *Will Eisner* friend and associate *Denis Kitchen* (who worked with DC on various Eisner projects, including the ***Spirit Archives*** series) began discussing a ***Spirit*** monthly, the purpose of which, according to DiDio, was to "introduce the character to a new audience."

"They decided a crossover with Batman was both a natural, and would allow the broadest base of readers a chance to see what a great world the Spirit lives in," Cooke said. That oneshot would serve as a lead-in to a new series. Both projects were in development before Eisner's passing in January, so Eisner knew about and approved of the idea.

"Before his surgery, Will had wanted all of his affairs in order, and DC and Denis finalized the deal for the project," explained Cooke. "We all know the heartbreaking conclusion of that story. We lost the master builder. The comic book language that we all work with, the very nature of this artform as I employ it, was created by a quadrangle of men. *Joe Simon, Jack Kirby, Harvey Kurtzman* and the greatest storyteller of all... *Will Eisner*."

Cooke described the ***Batman/The Spirit*** book as "big, exciting and colorful. There is a certain lightness of tone that comes from the contrast between these two characters and the sparks that creates. I'll be penciling and inking ***The Spirit*** monthly, and it'll be very much the type of work I'm known for; probably closer to ***Catwoman*** and Slam Bradley in feel than ***New Frontier***."

Cooke said that he had two main goals for the series. ""One, to preserve and if humanly possible, *enrich* the core essence of the Spirit. Give long-time readers a contemporary look at the magic that has held them for decades, and introduce a new generation to the irresistible pull of this rich human drama. Action, crime, romance, humor and pathos will all be generously employed in the 'spirit' of the original strip. There'll be no deconstruction and every issue will be a story unto itself, making every issue an ideal jumping on point. Every story will try to add and hopefully strengthen the essence of Eisner's characters and vision.

"The second goal is to produce a work that reaffirms the Spirit as the strip for graphic innovation that enhances storytelling. This second mandate is, I believe, the one to be artistically important. While we cleave to Eisner's vision and world-view for Central City, we should be equally mindful of his vision that contemporary storytelling techniques be continually introduced to engage the reader in fresh and appropriate ways. I believe that this would have been very important to Will, and I feel it is the key to avoiding a simple homage."

Cooke will accomplish that, in part, by establishing this new Spirit in a contemporary setting. "At first glance, it may seem The Spirit should ideally take place in the 'neverwhere' of '40's post-war Central City, and could make for a brilliant monthly," Cooke explained. "But I think that the *real* opportunities lie in placing the strip in the modern world."

How do you take Eisner's Spirit, a series that seems to be closely linked to the era in which it was created, and update it to the 21st Century? Editor *Scott Dunbier*, who takes over the monthly series from ***Batman/The Spirit*** editor *Mark Chiarello*, said that "it's a tightrope walk. The Spirit is one of the true ***Citizen Kane***s of comics; first and foremost you have to respect the integrity of the character. But you also need to consider that many readers today will not be familiar with the strip. So the trick is to make it accessible to a modern audience without betraying the essence of it. Luckily *Darwyn Cooke* has been able to walk trough that minefield. Yes, the Spirit lives in a modern world that has computers and cell phones. Will you see him checking e-mail and text messaging? No."

Will Eisner's rich cast of supporting characters play a role in the new series? "You'll be seeing plenty of familiar faces," Dunbier said. "Commissioner Dolan, Ellen, Ebony, P'Gell, and many more of the Spirit's supporting characters. Additionally, Darwyn is creating a host of new players to the Spirit's milieu."

Dunbier is thrilled to have Cooke on board for ***The Spirit's*** launch. "I can't think of anyone I would trust more on ***The Spirit***. When ***New Frontier*** came out I was a little surprised that it was leading off with The Losers. I was looking forward to getting into the meat of the story, Green Lantern, the Challengers. But when I read that first chapter I was hooked, it was absolutely riveting. Darwyn builds his books in layers, he's a great storyteller. What more could you want of a guy following *Will Eisner*?"

To make it easy for new readers to explore the Spirit's world, the new book will be presented as "a series of self-contained stories," Dunbier said, "but there is also an overarcing continuity that ties the series together."

Cooke is eager to bring his own vision to ***The Spirit,*** but he remains faithful to the core concepts that defined Eisner's Spirit run. "At its heart we find a strip about people, and life in the city. Story and character are king. They are timeless stories that resonate regardless of the era. By placing it in the modern world we are far more likely to be embraced by new readers... Placing Denny Colt in the modern world is an updating of sorts, and there will be a number of new femmes, criminals and loveable losers to go with the incredible cast Will created," concluded Cooke. "However, I don't see any need for 'tweaking' the concept. Will's genius has created a strip where I can explore the human condition from virtually any conceivable angle. I couldn't ask for more."

Batman/The Spirit, a $4.99 comic, is scheduled for November 29th release. ***The Spirit #1,*** a $2.99 comic, follows on December 20th.

by Cliff Biggers & Matt Brady

Courtesy your friendly neighborhood comics outlet!

Comic Shop Newsarama

Produced by Comic Shop News in cooperation with Matt Brady and newsarama.com

Peterson Shares a Lovely Vision

Sure, the Vision is a decidedly male figure in the Marvel Universe—but in the Ultiverse, she's a different Vision altogether! Readers first gazed upon the Ultimate Vision in ***Ultimate Extinction,*** where *Brandon Peterson* depicted her decidedly female form; now she's about to star in her own limited series written by *Mike Carey,* and once again Peterson is on hand to delineate her adventures.

Having spent much of her history traveling through space to warn worlds of their impending consumption by "Gah Lak Tus," the Ultimate Vision was instrumental in the fight to save the Earth from that threat during ***Ultimate Extinction***. Now, scientist George Tarleton has captured a piece of the Gah Lak Tus entity and plans to reactivate it for his own evil purposes, a plan that can only be stopped by Ultimate Vision.

Peterson explained to ***Comic Shop Newsarama's*** *Vaneta Rogers* why he finds this character and her miniseries so appealing. "I guess the thing I liked most about it was it lent itself to my strengths. I do pretty good women characters, and people always like how I do metal and technology. And actually, that was probably the biggest reason why I really wanted to do the ***Ultimate Vision*** mini-series -- it was a continuation of what I did in ***Ultimate Extinction***."

Peterson is the first to admit that ***Ultimate Vision*** isn't a typical Ultimate title. "Most of the Ultimate books follow the policy of taking something that people are very aware of and very popular from the regular Marvel Universe and updating it and making it more contemporary... The Vision has never been, in the Marvel Universe, like Wolverine or Spider-Man in terms of popularity.

"But how this series sort of spun off is that we wanted to develop our *own* universe within the Ultimate Universe... It's not just creating a carbon copy of what's going on in the regular Marvel Universe. It's sort of

developing its own characters, its own mythos, its own background characters. A lot of characters are brought in during this story that were there with ***Ultimate Extinction*** and are built upon. And new characters are introduced with Ultimate Vision."

One of those new characters is the villain, who Peterson declined to name—but he did describe the character as "a completely new take on a regular Universe villain. It's funny because when I tell people, 'Hey, I'm drawing the Ultimate version of this villain,' they say, 'it must be so fun to draw that goofy villain.' It doesn't necessarily make people think of scary and threatening. But in ***Ultimate Vision***, he's not goofy at all. He's actually kind of horrific. He's a monster, and horribly disfigured. I don't think I'm supposed to give out the name of the villain yet, but I'm sort of jumping around it."

While the Ultimate Vision's origins are most decidedly cosmic, the character's miniseries is more down to Earth. "I think there is the perception that after ***Ultimate Extinction***, we're just going to shoot off into space and concentrate on alien worlds, but all of ***Ultimate Vision*** takes place close to Earth. So we make the Ultimate Universe part of what's going on."

Peterson is enjoying his collaboration with *Mike Carey*. "What he's been doing on ***Ultimate Fantastic Four*** shows he really understands science fiction and has a really unique vision for it. (Oh boy -- I didn't mean that pun!) This is another showcase of that talent... I had a chance to read the first three scripts before I agreed to do the book, and after the first one, I knew I wanted to draw it. It's really giving me the chance to emphasize my strengths and have fun working with Mike's script... I honestly feel that it's the best thing I've done since returning to Marvel."

Ultimate Vision #1 is slated for early December release.

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Long Halloween Gets Absoluted!

DC has unveiled their list of collected editions for March and April of 2007—and the big news is the addition of *Jeph Loeb & Tim Sale's* ***Absolute Batman: The Long Halloween*** to a growing list of impressive ***Absolute*** editions of major DC projects.

Here's the full list, divided by imprint:

DC

- ***Absolute Batman: The Long Halloween,*** a lavish oversized collection of the *Jeph Loeb-Tim Sale* maxiseries *(April);*
- ***All Star Superman Volume One,*** a hardcover collection of the first six issues of the *Grant Morrison-Frank Quitely* series *(April);*
- ***Batman & the Mad Monk,*** compiling the *Matt Wagner* miniseries *(April);*
- ***Batman: Detective,*** collecting the *Paul Dini* tales from ***Detective #s 821-826*** *(April);*
- ***Batman: Snow,*** collecting *Dan Curtis Johnson & J.H.Williams III's* story from ***Batman: Legends of the Dark Knight #s 191-196*** *(March);*
- ***Crisis on Multiple Earths: The Team-Ups Volume 2,*** featuring classic Silver Age tales from ***The Atom, Brave & Bold, The Flash, Green Lantern,*** and ***The Spectre*** *(March);*
- ***Crisis on Multiple Earths Volume Five,*** collecting ***Justice League #s 159-160, 171-172, & 183-185*** *(April);*
- ***The Flash—The Fastest Man Alive: Lightning in a Bottle,*** collecting the first six issues of the *Danny Bilson-Paul DeMeo-Ken Lashley-Karl Kerschl* series;
- ***Green Arrow: Crawling from the Wreckage,*** collecting ***Green Arrow #s 60-65*** *(March);*
- ***Green Lantern: Rebirth,*** a softcover edition of the limited series *(March);*
- ***Hawkgirl: The Maw,*** collecting ***Hawkgirl #s 50-56*** *(April);*
- ***Jonah Hex Volume Two: Guns of Vengeance,*** collecting ***Jonah Hex #s 7-12*** *(April);*
- ***Justice Volume One,*** a softcover edition of the trade paperback collecting the first four issues of the *Jim Krueger-Alex Ross-Doug Braithwaite* series *(April);*
- ***Nightwing: Brothers in Blood,*** collecting ***Nightwing #s 118-124*** *(March);*
- ***Robin: Wanted,*** collecting ***Robin #s 148-153*** *(March);*
- ***Secret Six: Six Degrees of Devastation,*** collecting the six-issue miniseries by *Gail Simone, Brad Walker, & Jimmy Palmiotti (March);*
- ***Sgt. Rock: The Prophecy,*** collecting the *Joe Kubert* miniseries *(April);*
- ***Shadowpact: The Pentacle Plot,*** collecting ***Shadowpact #s 1-7*** *(March);*
- ***Showcase Presents Hawkman Volume One,*** a B&W compendium that includes stories from ***Brave & Bold #s 34-34 & 42-44, Mystery in Space #s 87-90,*** and ***Hawkman #s 1-11*** *(March);*
- ***Showcase Presents The House of Mystery Volume Two,*** reprinting ***House of Mystery #s 195-211*** *(March);*
- ***Showcase Presents Superman Volume Three,*** collecting Silver Age Man of Steel tales from ***Action #s 276-292 & Superman #s 146-156*** *(April);*
- ***Showcase Presents Teen Titans Volume Two,*** collecting ***Teen Titans #s 19-36, Brave & Bold #83 & 94,*** and ***World's Finest #205*** *(April);*
- ***Spirit Archives Volume Two,*** collecting classic *Will Eisner* Spirit sections from July through December, 1950 *(April);*
- ***Supergirl: Candor,*** collecting ***Supergirl #s 6-9, Superman #223,*** and pages from ***JSA Classified #2*** and ***JLA #s 122-123*** *(March);*
- ***Supergirl & the Legion of Super-Heroes Volume Four: Adult Education,*** collecting ***Supergirl & The Legion #s 20-27****(April);*
- ***Superman/Batman: The Greatest Stories Ever Told Volume One,*** featuring two hundred pages of classic Superman-Batman teamup tales from the early days of the Silver Age to the present *(March);*
- ***Superman: Action Comics Archives Volume Five,*** reprinting the Superman tales from ***Action #s 69-85*** *(March);* and
- ***Wonder Woman: The Greatest Stories Ever Told,*** collecting 192 pages of classic adventures starring the Amazing Amazon *(April).*

Vertigo

- ***American Splendor Volume One: Another Day,*** collecting the first four Vertigo issues of the *Harvey Pekar* slice-of-life series *(April);*
- ***Deadman Volume One: Deadman Walking,*** collecting ***Deadman #s 1-5*** *(March);*
- ***The Exterminators Volume Two: Insurgency,*** collecting ***Exterminators #s 6-10*** *(March);*
- ***John Constantine: Hellblazer—Reasons to be Cheerful,*** collecting ***Hellblazer #s 201-206*** *(April);*
- ***Loveless Volume Two: Thicker Than Blackwater,*** collecting ***Loveless #s 6-12*** *(March);* and
- ***Sandman Mystery Theatre Volume Five: Dr. Death & the Night of the Butcher,*** collecting ***Sandman Mystery Theatre #s 21-28*** *(April).*

WildStorm

- ***The Boys Volume One,*** collecting the first six issues of the edgy *Garth Ennis-Darick Robertson* series *(March);*
- ***Ex Machina Volume Five: Smoke Smoke,*** collecting ***Ex Machina #s 21-25*** *(March);* and
- ***Thunderbolt Jaxon,*** collecting the five-part limited series by *Dave Gibbons & John Higgins (April).*

Coming Comics—Dark Horse in February

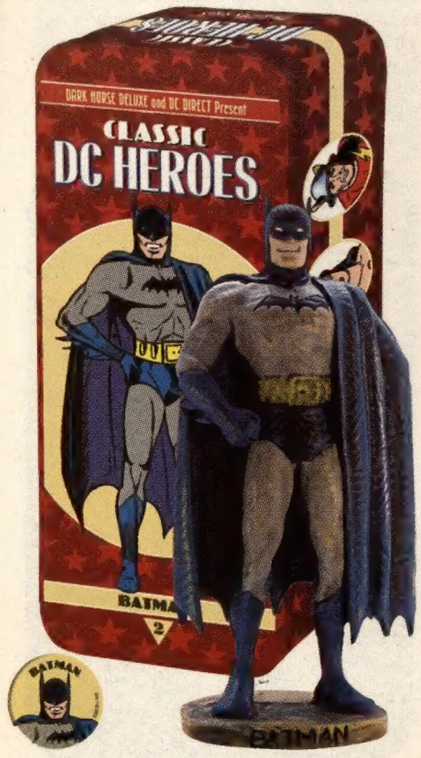
Out of print for years, Dark Horse's ***Aliens Vs. Predator*** tales return to comic shops in the ***Aliens Vs. Predator Omnibus,*** a 456-page trade paperback that includes the original ***Aliens Vs. Predator*** and the continuation originally published as ***Aliens Vs. Predator: War.***

Legendary horror illustrator *Bernie Wrightson* joins with writer *Steve Niles* for the four-part ***City of Others.*** The tale focuses on Stosh Bludowski, a rage-driven killer who makes his living doing what comes easy—until the day he meets two jobs in an alley who just won't die, and a grotesque mystery unfolds right in front of him. Soon, the remorseless killer is confronted by a reality he could never imagine, and he will be invited to make a decision once and for all . . . is he human, or is he Other?

Dark Horse's line of syroco-styled statues featuring classic Golden Age DC heroes con-

tinues with ***Classic DC Character #2: Batman.*** Limited to 2000 pieces, each rough-hewn figure is packaged in a litho-printed full-color tin box and includes a vintage-style pinback button, and booklet about the character.

Dark Horse's second syroco-styled offering for the month is ***Classic Peanuts Character #5: Pigpen.*** Limited to 1200 pieces, each statue is packaged with a booklet and a button and is packaged in a custom-tooled, full-color, litho-printed tin box.



Timothy Truman & Cary Nord present the prelude to the classic *Robert E. Howard* tale "Rogues in the House" in ***Conan #37.*** Conan and his companions have escaped the Spider King and made their way to a new city. But even as Conan fights his way through the arena, one of his friends is plotting his betrayal.

Adam Warren introduces a super-heroine with a second-rate name, a skin-tight costume that doesn't always work, and a bad rep in the original graphic novel ***Empowered.*** Nonetheless, she pluckily braves the ordeals of her bottom-rung super-heroic life with the help of her "thugalicious" boyfriend (and former Witless Minion) and her hard-drinking ninja girlfriend, not to mention the supervillainous advice from the caged alien demonlord watching DVDs from atop her coffee table.

Mary Scary is *Andrew Cosby & Troy Nixey's* sequel to ***Dreadful Ed.*** The star of this eponymous graphic novel is a weird baby girl who was swapped out for Ed when her parents, the Boogeyman and his wife, needed a male heir for their spooky kingdom! Mary has always been different from the rest of her peers. Maybe it's the spider on her head, maybe it's the snake around her neck . . . but something about her makes everything about her weird!

Mike Richardson & Jason Alexander present a chilling coming-of-age mystery in the four-issue miniseries ***The Secret.*** Tonight is supposed to be Tommy Morris's big chance: he's been invited to party with the social elite of Franklin High and maybe even hook up with the girl of his dreams. But when a prank call turns sour, Tommy gets much more than he bargained for...

Jacob Chabot's ***Skullboy,*** the first offering from the Dark Horse New Recruits contest winner, ventures into the third dimension with the release of the ***Skullboy Vinyl Figure,*** a 6" tall figure of the nefarious and

temperamental character.

Dark Horse collected editions include:

- ***13th Son: worse Thing Waiting,*** collecting the horror series by *Kelley Jones;*
- ***Appleseed Book One,*** a manga-sized reprinting of *Masamune Shirow's* sf-adventure series;
- ***Conan and the Songs of the Dead,*** collecting the limited series by *Joe R. Lansdale & Timothy Truman;*
- ***Fear Agent Volume One: Re-Ignition,*** collecting *Rick Remender & Tony Moore's* series originally published by Image;
- ***Flood!,*** a new edition of *Eric Drooker's* graphic novel that adds a bonus chapter, "After the Flood," which includes thirty-two pages of new graphics, preliminary art, and an in-depth interview with the author;
- ***Little Lulu Volume 15: The Explorers,*** collecting *John Stanley & Irving Tripp* tales from ***Little Lulu #s 64-68,*** originally published in 1953-54;
- ***Star Wars: 30th Anniversary Volume Two—Jedi Vs. Sith,*** a hardcover version of the long-out-of-print graphic novel; and
- ***Star Wars: Legacy Volume One—Broken,*** collecting ***Legacy #s 1-3 & 5-7.***

Ins & Outs

In: A new printing for ***Black Panther #21*** and a new cover for ***Black Panther #22.*** While the original printing of ***Black Panther #21*** featured a standard non-***Civil War*** cover, the book was actually a major ***Civil War*** tie-in title that could very well have far-reaching effects on the Marvel Universe. Lucky fans who snagged a copy of the book before it sold out know what we're talking about—but the legions of readers who didn't find out in time will get a second chance in late November, when a second printing, complete with a ***Civil War*** tie-in label, reaches shops. Furthermore, Marvel is pushing ***Black Panther #22*** back to a late-November release *and* they're adding a new cover featuring the now-traditional ***Civil War*** trade dress. Here's what Marvel has to say about the contents of #22: "When the honeymooning King T'Challa and Ororo visit Atlantis, Namor convinces them to finally become involved in the Civil War raging between America's super-heroes. Iron Man's plan to rule the U.S. with a military comprised of super-powered beings must be stopped. However, is Black Panther prepared to battle his former friend and teammate?"

Out: *Keith Giffen,* who is leaving ***Blue Beetle*** after the tenth issue. So who's taking over the writing honors? Well, "taking over" isn't exactly correct, since the writer will be *John Rogers,* who has been co-writing the book with Giffen ever since its launch. "John's not just some new guy wandering in off the street with a couple papers clutched under his arm," Giffen said. "John's a very successful screenwriter, he's proven his chops, he's a stand-up comedian—you know, the guy can *write.* I just feel comfortable leaving ***Blue Beetle*** in his hands. He understands the character. He's got the chops for it... I know DC feels comfortable as well, and [editor] *Joan Hilty* thinks that this, considering my schedule, is also best." And one month later, the book gets a new artist, as *Rafael Albuquerque* joins the team.

In: Artist *Stjepan Sejic,* who has signed an exclusive contract with Top Cow. Readers will see his work on ***Darkness Level One*** in December (see this issue's ***Hot Picks*** for more info!) and on ***Witchblade #s 105-107*** beginning in January. "Stjepan is an artist we've had our eye for some time", Top Cow VP Sales and Marketing *Filip Sablik* said. "We already knew he was an incredibly skilled colorist, but once we saw the caliber of his painted work we knew it would be a short time before this newcomer was a household name."

In: *Roy Thomas's* alternate reality series ***Anthem,*** which graduates from limited to ongoing series at Heroic Publishing. ***Anthem*** stars a group of young super-powered heroes fighting a desperate battle to save America in a world in which the Axis powers have very nearly won World War II.

In: A new ***Nexus*** series from *Mike Baron & Steve Rude.* Earlier this year, it appeared that the project was a no-go, but Rude has confirmed that he and Baron are back at work on the book—in fact, the first ten pages are already illustrated and Rude is making steady progress. "Steve saw an intro that Baron wrote to one of the ***Nexus Archive*** books (I believe #5 due out in a few months), and decided that if he could write something so brilliant for the ***Archives*** that he could write something just as brilliant for ***Nexus,***" *Jaynelle Rude* explained. "Steve called Baron, asked very nicely that he give the script another shot. He did a complete rewrite, Steve loved it, and the rest, as they say, is history. Baron's currently working on book four of the story arc, which is currently scheduled to run July-October 2007."

Coming Comics—Dynamite in February

The art of *J. Scott Campbell, J.G. Jones, Nick Bradshaw, Gabriele Dell'Otto, Kevin Sharpe,* and others is spotlighted in ***The Army of Darkness Poster Book,*** a 480page special.

Writer *Javier Grillo-Marxuach,* well known for his work on the television series ***Lost*** and ***Medium,*** makes his Dynamite debut with a comic inspired by a hit television series. ***Battlestar Galactica: Cylon Apocalypse,*** illustrated by *Carlos Rafael* with cover art by *Jim Starlin, Pat Lee, Michael Golden,* & Rafael, begins with an assault on a Cylon Basestar... by Cylon Raiders! As the Cylon Basestar crashes into an ocean-covered world, Adama and Starbuck discover a bizarre creature that appears to be a Cylon Centurion engulfed by diseased flesh. The Cylons are sick, and the apocalypse has begun!

Michael Avon Oeming & Ron Adrian present an all-new story to lead off ***Giant-Size Red Sonja #1.*** The hefty comic will also feature classic material by *Doug Moench, Roy Thomas, John Buscema, Frank Thorne, Howard Chaykin,* and others—and the Chaykin story is presented in color here for the first time ever!

Brandon Jerwa is joined by ***Army of Darkness*** illustrator *Kevin Sharpe* for a special New Year's Eve tale of love and loss in ***Highlander #5***—a tale that features the first Dynamite Comics appearance of Duncan MacLeod.

The sold-out ***Lone Ranger #1*** rides again in the ***Lone Ranger #1 Director's Cut,*** which supplements the story from the first issue with *Brett Matthews'* original script, *Sergio Cariello's* designs and thumbnails for the first issue, interviews with the creators, and a look at the making of a ***Lone Ranger*** page.

Michael Turner's cover art for ***Red Sonja #1*** is the inspiration for the ***Dynamite Select Red Sonja Statue by Michael Turner.*** The sculpture stands 13" tall, and a whopping 11.5" wide and 13" long.

Dynamite's poster and print offerings include the ***Red Sonja Uncut Cover Sheet,*** featuring untrimmed sheets of the ***Red Sonja #19*** cover; and ***Red Sonja Art Adams Poster,*** featuring Adams' retro-style variant cover art for ***Red Sonja #2.***

Leah Moore, John Reppion, & Stephen Segovia mix something old and something new in ***Witchblade: Shades of Gray,*** a four-issue limited series. The "something old" is *Oscar Wilde's* notorious hedonist Dorian Gray; the "something new" is Sara Pezzini, aka Witchblade. In the first issue, Detective Sara Pezzini and her new rookie partner race to stop a murdering madman. Waiting and watching in the shadows is the enigmatic Gray who may or may not be the murderer they seek.

Xena #6 is a special "return" issue: not only does writer *John Layman* return to the series, but Dark Xena also makes her return! Gabrielle and Joxer devise a plan to infiltrate Xena's deadly gang and save their friend. But what plans does Ares, the God of War, have for this new and deadly Warrior Princess?

Dynamite collected editions include:

- ***Adventures of Red Sonja Volume Three,*** reprinting the classic Marvel ***Red Sonja #s 8-15*** by *Roy Thomas & Frank Thorne;*
- ***Adventures of Red Sonja Volume One (New Edition),*** a reprinting of the sold-out collection of early Marvel material that includes *Jose Villarubia's* remastering of a rarely-seen *Neal Adams* tale;
- ***Red Sonja, She-Devil With a Sword Volume Two: Arrowsmiths,*** reprinting the return of Kulan Gath from ***Red Sonja #s 8-12,*** which is supplemented by a cover gallery and other bonus material; and
- ***Xena: Contest of Pantheons,*** a trade paperback collecting the first four issues of the series, including a complete cover gallery.

December's Top Twenty Comics

ALL STAR SUPERMAN #6

Grant Morrison (W); Frank Quitely (A)

(DC JUL060145 $2.99)

What's the Scoop?

The Man of Steel steps back from his super-heroic role to return to Smallville to mourn the loss of his adoptive father.

Why Should You Care?

Grant Morrison & Frank Quitely continue to produce *the* Superman book—if you're only going to read one title starring the original superhero in all his glory, this is the one!

ANITA BLAKE VAMPIRE HUNTER: GUILTY PLEASURES #3

Laurell K. Hamilton & Stacie Ritchie (W); Brett Booth (A)

(DBPro/Marvel OCT062198 $2.99)

What's the Scoop?

Can things get much worse than a near-death encounter with wererats? They certainly can if they involve Nikolaos, the vampire master of St. Louis!...

Why Should You Care?

Laurell K. Hamilton is this decade's *Anne Rice*—and the Dabel Brothers have proven that her legions of fans have an unquenchable thirst for comics adaptations of her work. Try it and find out what made ***Anita Blake*** the sleeper hit of 2006.

BATMAN CONFIDENTIAL #1

Andy Diggle (W); Whilce Portacio & Richard Friend (A)

(DC OCT060153 $2.99; also available in a signed edition (OCT0063398 $19.99))

What's the Scoop?

It only makes sense that billionaires would cross paths with fellow billionaires, right? So why *shouldn't* Bruce Wayne and Lex Luthor have a history? Now you can see what happened the first time they crossed paths in this previously-untold tale!

Why Should You Care?

Andy Diggle & Whilce Portacio launch a new monthly series that explores the Dark Knight's roots... and you might be surprised just how many untold early exploits there are!

CIVIL WAR #6

Mark Millar (W); Steve McNiven (A)

(Marvel AUG062033 $2.99)

What's the Scoop?

The ultimate confrontation between Captain America's anti-registration forces and Iron Man's pro-registration super-army begins here... and this is the battle that will force virtually every surviving superhero to choose a side!

Why Should You Care?

This story is so compelling that even a two-month break in the action didn't cool it down. The groundwork of the future Marvelverse is laid here!

CIVIL WAR: WAR CRIMES

Frank Tieri (W); Staz Johnson (A)

(Marvel OCT062150 $3.99)

What's the Scoop?

Wilson Fisk the felon formerly known as the Kingpin, offers to assist Iron Man in tracking down Captain America... but as you might suspect, his motives aren't very noble....

Why Should You Care?

The ramifications of ***Civil War*** continue to shake up the Marvelverse, forcing everyone to reconsider who are the heroes and who are the villains in this strange new world.

DARKNESS LEVEL 0

Paul Jenkins (W); Mattias Snygg (A)

(Image OCT061894 $2.99)

DARKNESS LEVEL 1

Paul Jenkins & David Wohl (W); Tyler Kirkham (A)

(Image OCT061892 $2.99)

What's the Scoop?

Jackie Estacado's first experiences with the Darkness are highlighted in these revealing tales that offer new insights into the inner workings of the Darkness powers.

Why Should You Care?

With a major videogame release for the XBox 360 and Playstation 3 systems next year, Top Cow is revitalizing the franchise with a series of books exploring the Jackie Estacado's Dark origins for the first time.

DETECTIVE COMICS #826

Paul Dini (W); Don Kramer & Wayne Faucher (A)

(DC OCT060156 $2.99)

What's the Scoop?

Robin falls into the clutches of the Joker—and we remember what happened the *last* time the Clown Prince of Crime spent a little alone time with a Boy Wonder, don't we?...

Why Should You Care?

Paul Dini continues to deliver unforgettable "done-in-one" stories—and this is one that fans will be talking about for months to come!

IRON MAN/ CAPTAIN AMERICA: CASUALTIES OF WAR

Christos Gage (W); Jeremy Haun (A)

(Marvel OCT062158 $3.99)

What's the Scoop?

Iron Man and Captain America make one final attempt at friendly reconciliation. Can they prevent this Civil War from splitting the Marvel superhero universe asunder, or are these two former allies destined to lead opposing forces?

Why Should You Care?

Now that Iron Man and Captain America have emerged as the iconic leaders of the pro-and anti-Registration-Act forces, *any* meeting involving the two is sure to have far-reaching ramifications.

JUSTICE LEAGUE OF AMERICA #4

Brad Meltzer (W); Ed Benes & Sandra Hope (A)

(DC SEP060235 $2.99; also available signed by Michael Turner (SEP063291 $49.99))

What's the Scoop?

The Justice League learns the identity of the mastermind who's posing a serious threat to the newly-formed team—and just when they could use the help, an old friend makes a new appearance.

Why Should You Care?

Brad Meltzer, who paved the way for the destruction of the JLA in ***Identity Crisis***, continues the restoration of the Justice League to its former glory in this adventure worthy of the world's greatest super-team.

JUSTICE SOCIETY OF AMERICA #1

Geoff Johns (W); Dale Eaglesham & Art Thibert (A)

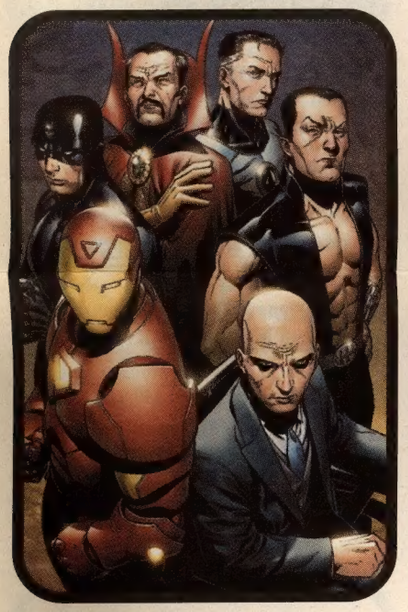
(DC OCT060203 $3.99; also available in a signed edition (OCT063397 $29.99))

What's the Scoop?

Green Lantern, the Flash, and Wildcat initiate a recruitment program. Their goal? to assemble an all-new Justice Society for the 21st Century! The result? A team comprised of classic heroes, their offspring, and some surprising new faces.

Why Should You Care?

They were the first super-team—and now *Geoff Johns, Dale Eaglesham, & Art Thibert* reinvent the classic concept with the same sort of "something old, something new" approach that made ***JSA*** a fan favorite.



NEW AVENGERS: ILLUMINATI #1

Brian Bendis & Brian Reed (W); Jim Cheung (A)

(Marvel OCT062165 $2.99; also available in a signed edition (OCT063394 $19.99))

What's the Scoop?

Six of the most powerful and influential heroes in the Marvel Universe have united to control the course of Marvel history more than once—and now readers will learn the secrets of those earlier exploits in this limited series that begins with a behind-the-scenes look at the Kree-Skrull War.

Why Should You Care?

Who can resist the allure of a conspiratorial tale of powerful entities secretly manipulating the events of history? Not *Brian Bendis, Brian Reed, & Jim Cheung*, that's for sure—and judging from the popularity of the first ***Illuminati*** tale last spring, neither can large numbers of Marvel fans!

NEWUNIVERSAL #1

Warren Ellis (W); Salvador Larroca (A)

(Marvel OCT062166 $2.99)

What's the Scoop?

On an Earth very much like our own, the direction of the human race is altered by the White Event, a cosmic anomaly of incredible proportions. The result is the transformation of a small number of humans into something *more...*

Why Should You Care?

Twenty years ago, before ***Rising Stars,*** before the Ultiverse, before ***Supreme Powers,*** Marvel created a new superhero universe—and now *Warren Ellis* is resurrecting that world in this bold new series.

SANDMAN MYSTERY THEATER: SLEEP OF REASON #1

John Ney Rieber (W); Eric Nguyen (A)

(Vertigo/DC OCT060281 $2.99)

What's the Scoop?

Against a backdrop of contemporary Afghanistan, the gas-masked mantle of Sandman is passed as a photojournalist assumes the role of the Sandman.

Why Should You Care?

Rather than simply updating the crimefighting Sandman concept, *John Ney Rieber* has constructed a tale that respects the original ***Sandman Mystery Theatre*** and establishes a clear connection between that continuity and this new series.

SPAWN/BATMAN INNER DEMONS

Todd McFarlane (W); Todd McFarlane & Greg Capullo (A)

(Image OCT061843 $5.99)

What's the Scoop?

Spawn has faced some diabolical adversaries, but is he prepared for the malevolent madness of the Joker? And what about Batman—can he combat a true demon from hell... one who doesn't speak in rhyme?

Why Should You Care?

More than a decade after their first meeting, Spawn and Batman reunite in this high-voltage oneshot that also marks Todd McFarlane's return to his best-known character. McFarlane. Capullo. Batman. Spawn. The Joker. Do you *need* any more reason to check this one out?

SPIRIT #1

Darwyn Cooke (W); Darwyn Cooke & J. Bone (A)

(DC OCT060226 $2.99)

What's the Scoop?

Will Eisner's legendary character returns in an all-new monthly series.

Why Should You Care?

There aren't many people who could channel Eisner's blend of energetic art, moody expressionism, and fluid linework—but *Darwyn Cooke* is one of those few who can invoke Eisner's vitality without imitating the master's work. Cooke brings an essential sense of wonder that makes ***The Spirit*** a joy to read.

TRANQUILITY #1

Gail Simone (W); Neil Googe (A)

(WildStorm/DC OCT060252 $2.99)

What's the Scoop?

The Man of Steel steps back from his superheroic role to return to Smallville to mourn the loss of his adoptive father.

Why Should You Care?

Grant Morrison & Frank Quitely continue to produce *the* Superman book—if you're only going to read one title starring the original superhero in all his glory, this is the one!

ULTIMATE SPIDER-MAN #103

Brian Bendis (W); Mark Bagley (A)

(Marvel OCT062126 $2.99)

What's the Scoop?

Who's behind the series of disasters that have befallen Peter in the past few months? Find out in the penultimate issue of the Clone Saga!

Why Should You Care?

Not only have *Brian Bendis & Mark Bagley* proven the phenomenal potential of a Clone Saga done right, but they're also making history with this issue of ***Ultimate Spider-Man*** as they surpass *Stan Lee & Jack Kirby's* 102 issues of ***Fantastic Four*** to make history for the longest continuous creative run on a Marvel superhero title.

ULTIMATE VISION #1

Mike Carey (W); Brandon Peterson (A)

(Marvel OCT062128 $2.99; also available in a signed edition (OCT063393 $19.99))

What's the Scoop?

The Earth may have been saved from the threat of Gah Lak Tus... but the head of AIM has acquired a piece of that galactic threat, and plans to reactivate it for his own purposes. And what do you suppose is the only thing standing in his way?...

Why Should You Care?

Readers first met the Vision in the pages of the Gah Lak Tus trilogy—and now she's coming back in her own limited series, accompanied by the all-star team of *Mike Carey & Brandon Peterson.*

WINTER SOLDIER: WINTER KILLS

Ed Brubaker (W); Lee Weeks (A)

(Marvel OCT062149 $3.99)

What's the Scoop?

He was once Captain America's sidekick. Then he returned as an amoral adversary of the Star-Spangled Avenger. Now he's trying to come to terms with his past, forge a direction for his future, and figure out where he fits into the Marvelverse. He's Bucky Barnes, aka the Winter Soldier, and this is the beginning of the next phase in his existence...

Why Should You Care?

'Fess up—you didn't think anyone could successfully bring Bucky back, did you? Well, not only did *Ed Brubaker* do it, he's transformed the tragic victim into a complex element in an increasingly unpredictable Marvel Universe!

X-23: TARGET X #1

Craig Kyle & Christopher Yost (W); Mike Choi (A)

(Marvel OCT062188 $2.99; also available in a signed edition (OCT063391 $19.99))

What's the Scoop?

She escaped from the facility that created her—so now what? That's a question that X-23 is struggling to answer... but those answers seem hard to come by!

Why Should You Care?

Ever since her first miniseries ended, fans have been clamoring for X-23's return. Well, now she's back... and her path is leading to an inevitable confrontation with the one man most responsible for her life—Wolverine!

Check 'Em Out: Books You Should Be Reading

BAKERS MEET JINGLE BELLE

(Dark Horse OCT060022 $2.99)

The family of a cartoonist meets the daughter of Santa Claus in this unpredictable oneshot by *Paul Dini & Kyle Baker.* Think of it as as great way to sample *two* delightful must-read series at the same time!

EXILES ANNUAL #1

(Marvel OCT062182 $3.99)

The Original Exiles take on the current the current team lineup in this special extra-length issue of Marvel's reality hopping series.

FABLES #56

(Vertigo/DC OCT060289 $3.50)

Is Santa a fable? That's the question that gets answered here in ***Fables'*** first-ever special Christmas issue.

FRIDAY THE 13TH #1

(WildStorm/DC OCT060277 $2.99)

Jimmy Palmiotti, Justin Gray, & Adam Archer present new tales of the terror of Crystal Lake—and you can witness the mayhem for yourself on Wednesday the 13th!

LOVE AND CAPES #2

(Maerkle OCT063553 $3.95)

Continuing *Thom Zahler* 's story of romance between a superhero and a normal woman. A little bit ***Incredibles,*** a dash of ***Superman,*** a pinch of ***Strangers in Paradise***—it's a quirky recipe, but it works!

FYI: Great Additions to Your Reference Library

ALTER EGO #63

(TwoMorrows OCT063800 $6.95)

The legendary Alex Toth is featured in an issue that features a previously-unpublished interview, tributes and oodles of art both published and unpublished.

DARK HORSE COMICS—FIRST TWENTY YEARS HC

(Dark Horse AUG060021 $24.95)

Take a look back at the writers, artists, and characters who have made Dark Horse a success—and sneak a peek at the up-and-coming talents who will set future trends.

MODERN MASTERS VOL 10: KEVIN MAGUIRE SC

(TwoMorrows OCT063722 $14.95)

Comics' master of visual emotion is spotlighted in the latest volume of TwoMorrows' ***Modern Masters*** series. Is there lots of artwork? Oh *yeah*...

Hot Commodities: December's Hottest Merchandising & Collectibles

CLASSIC HULK STATUE

(Bowen SEP064366 $200.00)

Lots of sculptors have tried, but no one has managed to nail the power and savagery of the Hulk like *Randy Bowen* has in this iconic sculpture.

CLASSIC PEANUTS CHARACTER #2 LUCY VAN PELT STATUE

(Dark Horse SEP060055 $39.95)

Dark Horse's distinctive line of folk-art-crude syroco-style statues continues with this stylish sculpture of the inimitable Lucy.

CRISIS ON INFINITE EARTHS SERIES 3 DR. LIGHT ACTION FIGURE

(DC Direct MAY060252 $19.99)

CRISIS ON INFINITE EARTHS SERIES 3 E2 HUNTRESS ACTION FIGURE

(DC Direct MAY060249 $19.99)

CRISIS ON INFINITE EARTHS SERIES 3 SUPERBOY PRIME ACTION FIGURE

(DC Direct MAY060251 $19.99)

CRISIS ON INFINITE EARTHS SERIES 3 WEAPONER ACTION FIGURE

(DC Direct MAY060250 $19.99)

CRISIS ON INFINITE EARTHS SERIES 3 BATMAN ACTION FIGURE

(DC Direct MAY060248 $19.99)

CRISIS ON INFINITE EARTHS SERIES 3 SET

(DC Direct MAY060245 $79.99)

Five more figures inspired by the legendary *Marv Wolfman-George Pérez* series that rebooted the DCU two decades ago.

MJOLNIR, HAMMER OF THOR PROP REPLICA

(Diamond Select AUG062867 $350.00)

It's the second time someone has attempted a replica of Thor's hammer, but this time they get it right! This hefty cast aluminum hammer, limited to 1000 pieces, includes a museum-quality acrylic display case with name plaque as well as a handle wrapped in the finest glove leather.

Collected Cool: December's Best Reprint Volumes

COMPLETE INVINCIBLE LIBRARY VOL 1 HC

(Image OCT061854 $125.00; also available in a signed edition (OCT06185 $175.00))

This ultra-limited whopper of a hardcover presents the first 24 issues of *Robert Kirkman's* teen-superhero series—along with oodles of bonus pages, the zero issue, and more— in one massive hardcover volume.

EC ARCHIVES: TALES FROM THE CRYPT VOL 1 HC

(Gemstone OCT063431 $49.95)

Stunning full-color reprint of the first six issues of the acclaimed EC horror series. And if you don't believe us when we rave about the color, check it out for yourself—no classic reprint volume has ever seen a better color treatment than this!

FATHOM DEFINITIVE ED VOL 1 TP

(Aspen OCT063155 $39.99)

The series that put *Michael Turner* on the map is collected here. This hefty trade paperback includes ***Fathom #s 1-14*** plus an extensive cover gallery.

JUSTICE LEAGUE OF AMERICA HEREBY ELECTS TP

(DC OCT060211 $14.99)

Membership in the World's Mightiest Super-Team is earned in these classic stories from ***Justice League of America #s 4, 75, 105-106, 146, 161, & 173-174*** as Green Arrow, Black Canary, Elongated Man, Red Tornado, Hawkgirl, Zatanna and Black Lightning prove they have what it takes to join the JLA.

SAVAGE DRAGON ARCHIVES VOL 1 TP

(Image OCT061864 $19.99)

The complete Overlord epic is presented in this hefty volume that collects the original three issue miniseries and ***Savage Dragon #s 1-21.*** Want guest stars? Howsabout the Wildcats and the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles?

SHOWCASE PRESENTS SHAZAM! VOL 1 TP

(DC SEP060253 $16.99)

Get read for a whole lot of wonderment for a little bit of money! This phonebook-sized black and white compendium includes all the new stories from ***Shazam! #1-35*** (1973-1978).

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